

Help women deliver healthy, happy babies.

You can advise your preconceptional patients or clients that the best time to stop drinking is when they decide to get pregnant. You also can reassure women who are already pregnant that if they stop drinking now, they can reduce the potential harm to the fetus.



- An enclosed insert suggests ways to start conversations with mothers-to-be and their families and friends about alcohol use.
- You may request companion pamphlets to this one for women and their families and friends through SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). To order publications, call (800) 729-6686 or access the Web site: <http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov>.

As many as 60,000 babies born each year are affected by prenatal alcohol exposure.*

Prevention is the only cure. You are a critical part of the community network that supports the birth of healthy babies.

* National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (2000), FAS Fact Sheet; Sampson, P.D., Streissguth, A.P., Bookstein, F.L., Little, R.E., Clarren, S.K., Dehaene, P., Hanson, J.W., & Graham, J.M. Jr. (1997). Incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome and prevalence of alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders. *Teratology*, 56(5), 317-326.



Help a patient or client
Have a
healthy baby.
Be an
alcohol-free
mother-to-be.



The background features a repeating hexagonal pattern in light blue and white. In the upper right quadrant, there are three larger teal hexagons arranged in a cluster. In the lower center, there is a large, stylized line drawing of a pregnant woman from the side, facing right, holding her pregnant belly. The Department of Health and Human Services logo is located at the bottom left, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration logo is at the bottom right.





Many pregnant women have misconceptions about risk.

Give pregnant women healthy advice.

Health care professionals, social or human service providers, and public health or outreach workers are trusted sources of advice. And women, as well as their families and friends, need your advice on alcohol use during pregnancy—whatever their race, socioeconomic background, or level of drinking.



- Research shows that 19 percent of women drink at some point during pregnancy.*
- If you spend a few minutes discussing the risks of drinking while pregnant, you can help change this behavior.

Every pregnant woman needs to know the facts.

- Alcohol is a teratogen—a substance that can cause abnormalities in a developing fetus.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications. The term FASD is not intended for use as a clinical diagnosis.
- Because alcohol affects so many sites in the brain, it can cause more harm to the developing fetus than heroin, cocaine, or marijuana.**

* National Pregnancy and Health Survey, (1996). *Drug abuse among women delivering live births: 1992*. NIH publication 96-3819. Rockville, MD: DHHS, NIDA.

** Stratton, K., Howe, C., & Battaglia, F. (Eds.). (1996). *Fetal alcohol syndrome: Diagnosis, epidemiology, prevention and treatment*. Rockville, MD: National Academy Press.

A lot of people do not know that, like smoking and using drugs, alcohol also can hurt a pregnant woman's growing fetus.

- There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy.* Yet, many light to moderate drinkers think they are not at risk.
- There is no safe type of alcohol during pregnancy. A lot of people think that a glass of beer, wine, or a wine cooler is less harmful than a mixed drink or cocktail with hard liquor.
- There is also no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. The first few weeks of fetal development can be a time of great vulnerability.
- Some people think the placenta protects the fetus. This barrier still allows alcohol in the mother's bloodstream to pass to the fetus via the umbilical cord. In fact, because fetuses cannot process alcohol, their blood alcohol concentration is higher than their mother's.
- Women who drank during a previous pregnancy and had a healthy baby need to be reminded that every pregnancy is different. No amount of alcohol is safe every time.

Many women do not know the problems caused by FASD.

Your patients or clients, and their families and friends, may not know that alcohol can cause babies to have problems that range from trouble eating and sleeping to mental retardation. They may not know that FASD cannot be inherited—or cured. They may not know that some problems do not become apparent until later in the child's life.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders include the following:

- Facial anomalies
- Growth retardation
- Central nervous system dysfunction
- Attention deficits
- Learning disabilities
- Poor judgment
- Impulsive behavior
- Language difficulties

* Government warning label on alcoholic beverages. Public Law 100-690, Section 204.